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Citizen K.

TO

Bailie JOHN WALKER.

AS you gave intimation, both in the news-papers, and by a hand-bill carefully diſperſed, of your intention to addreſs the public, in vindication of your own conduct, from the general ſuſpicions which prevailed againſt it, on account of your ſuppoſed infidelity to the chief magiſtrate, and other counſellors of this city, with whom you had connected yourſelf, I waited with impatience for that publication, earneſtly wiſhing, that a perſon whoſe character I have hitherto reſpected, might be able to reſtore himſelf to the affections and good opinion of his fellow-citizens; but I am at a loſs to expreſs, whether my aſtoniſhment or indignation was greateſt, when I read your letter, openly and daringly avowing principles which I did not conceive the moſt inferior magiſtrate in the kingdom would have ventured to acknowledge, as the ruling principle of his conduct in the diſcharge of the moſt important duties of a magiſtrate; I mean, in the choice of the office-bearers and rulers within the city. Your addreſs has indeed one merit to recommend it; it is void of hypocriſy; for you have without reſerve declared, and your fellow-citizens in time coming are intitled to hold it as part of your creed, that the moſt able, the moſt amiable, the moſt reſpectable character in the city, is not intitled to be a magiſtrate, unleſs he firſt ſwear allegiance to an individual, whom you are pleaſed to adopt as the ruler of your own conſcience.

This is the general ſubſtance of what you have publiſhed. An anſwer has been made to your letter by the chief magiſtrate, to whom it is addreſſed; and from the peruſal of the two publications every man is enabled to judge between you. For my own part, unconnected as I am with him, and notwithſtanding the partiality I entertained for you, it is impoſſible for me not to feel, that you have treated him moſt cruelly and injuriouſly; and the apology you offer for your conduct is, if poſſible, worſe than the

offence. It is not however my purpoſe to become the partiſan of either of you; but I cannot refrain from offering a few obſervations upon the *ſervility* and *want of candour* which appear in every line of what you have offered to the public as a vindication of your own conduct.——But ſince I have mentioned the Lord Provoſt, I muſt give it as my opinion, that in every reſpect he has behaved as a public-ſpirited and liberal magiſtrate, with a juſt regard to the dignity of his office, and the capital of his country. He has all along been unconfined by the little limited views of a junto, who think of nothing but of forming the c——l to the mind of the great man whom they ſerve, or of getting poſts for their friends; but has thrown himſelf out into the line of public ſervice with a vigour and capacity that has done him honour. I need not enumerate to you the particulars of his conduct, for you explicitly confeſs his merit. We are all witneſſes how ſuperior he has been in this reſpect to his predeceſſors for ten years before. It is not every one who is born to be an able and liberal-minded magiſtrate; and whenever he appears, he muſt be ſucceſsful; for his ſuperior talents, joined with integrity as well as power, ſway the minds of men into chearful concurrence with all his plans. I have thought, and indeed have ſaid it to ſome of my neighbours, long before I had any idea of his disjoining himſelf from Sir L—— D——, while he was yet his political as well as his perſonal friend, that our chief magiſtrate diſcovered a ſpirit far above the party he belonged to; and that they would not long chuſe to retain him among them.

But I forget myſelf in the praiſes of this worthy magiſtrate, and muſt now deſcend to conſider your apology, which I accuſed of ſervility, and want of candour, to give it no harſher epithets.

Is there one idea in it, from beginning to end, that does not terminate on Sir L—— D——? Is it not clear from that letter, that you think every other conſideration, the intereſt, the dignity, and honour, of the town, ſhould all be given up to the inclinations of Sir L—— D——? I have heard of ſuch abject ſervility; but hardly believed it could exiſt. But you openly avow it in print; nay, ſeem to glory in it. Mark to what a depth the abjectneſs of your ſpirit is ſunk. He who has conſtantly lived in Edinburgh for thirty years, thinks, that he may not have perſonal knowledge of many of the tradeſmen returned on the leets for deacons;

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deacons; that therefore he would apply for information.—To whom? would one think. To ſome of your fellow-citizens, who happened to know them better?—No: He who has lived thirty years in Edinburgh, and whom it was not beneath to be converſant with many of the tradeſmen there, he will apply to Sir L—— D——, who for thirty years paſt has never lived, but on ſuch occaſions as this, in Edinburgh, and who knows none of the tradeſmen, (for all his furniture is of the London make), and never ſpoke to one of them, but to aſk his vote for a deacon! Think of this, and bluſh for the principles you avow!

O! but, ſay you, I only wanted to know from Sir L——, whether they were friendly to him, or not; taking *other* information with reſpect to the other quality, of their being reſpectable men. You wanted to know, B—— W——r, if, like yourſelf, they were ſlaves to Sir L—— D——; and if you found them ſo, it was needleſs to make the other inquiry; for no voluntary ſlave can be a reſpectable man. And what is all this devotion and ſervility for? You tell yourſelf, that the only *favour you ever received from him, was his aſſiſtance ſeveral years ago in an application to the treaſury about a mercantile affair, in which others were concerned as well as you; that you wanted nothing from him; that you was no hanger-on for a poſt, or any thing of that nature; but that you was acquainted with him above thirty years ago, had appeared his friend when choſen member for the city, and continued to be ſo.* Thus you ſay, it is for no perſonal ſervice that you are this man's devoted ſlave. But obſerve further, that you agree with the Provoſt, that *he has done nothing for the city ſince he became member: you remember little he has done; you wiſh he may do more; and hope, that if any proper plan be laid before him for ſerving the city, he will exert himſelf to execute it.* So it is not for his public ſervices neither that you are ſo much devoted to him. Is this the way that attachments to great men are commonly created? It is poſſible to conceive a worthy citizen ſo much affected and dazzled with public ſervices done to his own city, as to go perhaps too far in compliance with the wiſhes of the great man who performed them: but to become entirely his, without either private favours, or public ſervices, is a thing quite unheard of. It has no reſemblance to the common bonds of political attachment. It looks like inchantment; and this Sir L—— muſt be a wonderful magician, who has invented

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new ways of ſerving merchants, without giving them *poſts, or any thing of that nature.*

And what a ſtrange character is this you give of Sir L—— D——? *He has done nothing for the city ſince he has been member. You remember little he has done: you wiſh he may do more.* — *You hope* — Heaven defend me from ſuch a friend! But a ſlave can never be a friend. Is Sir L——, after all, ſuch a man as you deſcribe? Was he a very ſplendid wooer; but after he won you, has he been a very negligent huſband? Obſerve how it is marked, — *He has done nothing for the city ſince he was choſen member.* That implies, that he did ſomething before he was choſen member. It ſeems his after performance muſt be far inferior to his firſt ſwaggering promiſes. It is really wonderful, after all, that this man has done nothing. I do now remember, that ſeveral very fine projects have been talked of; but they have all died away without being executed. It is a fine talent that of flattering the public hopes; but let the flatterer beware of the bad effects of repeated diſappointments.

I obſerved, Sir, that beſides the moſt abject ſervility that runs through the whole of this your apology, that there is alſo a great want of candour. For admitting, that every thing paſſed exactly as you ſtate; yet, from the letter itſelf, there is enough to prove my poſition.

For in that very paragraph animadverted upon before, for the ſervility it betrays, you plainly declare, that the only qualification you wiſhed for in the deacons for whom you was to give your vote, was their being friendly to Sir L——; and entirely omit the main article, of their being reſpectable men. But here you may reply, Who ever thought that deacons were to be reſpectable men? That quality could only apply to the magiſtracy. Is this the reaſon why you voted for the very loweſt among the tradeſmen; bankrupts, and the meaneſt and moſt dependent of them? But beſides, obſerve how artfully you, in the ſame paragraph, "leave it in your "own breaſt to judge who were men of reſpectable characters, "fit to be magiſtrates, when the candidates were propoſed, be-"cauſe that was future." And as, in the very next ſentence, you declare, that you are reſolved to meet with neither party in the future ſteps of the election, you put it out of your own power to concert with the Provoſt and his friends about reſpectable men for the magiſtracy, and thereby evade moſt ſkilfully the chief part of your original engagement. Obſerve too, that though "you

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" are to meet with neither party in time coming;" yet a few lines below you avow, that you are to reſort to Sir L—— for information about the deacons.

You will next obſerve the abſurdity which attends the account you give of your own original concert. It ſurely was not to form a magiſtracy or c——l more friendly to Sir L—— than thoſe of late years. On the contrary, it was to open the door to the moſt reſpectable citizens, and reſcue the magiſtracy from that direction that had made it both grievous and diſcreditable to the city. Is it then poſſible to ſuppoſe, that the main deſign was ſuſpended upon a condition that would have entirely prevented the execution of it? The magiſtracy were to be friendly to Sir L——, it is true; but entirely unlike the former ſet. They were to be friendly to him; but not dependent on him. That is to ſay, they were to be in a ſtate, and of a temper, to give, and not to receive. They were to be willing to beſtow their place in parliament upon him on a future election, if they found he deſerved it; or to be at liberty to give it to one more worthy, if he deſerved it not. In ſhort, they were to be freemen, and not ſlaves.—Upon this plan a ſet of magiſtrates were propoſed to Sir L——; but he would not agree to them. He liked his old friends better. He was for keeping the door ſhut, as formerly. In this ſtate of things, the Provoſt and his friends held to their original agreement, all but you, and two more, who receded from it; and then pretended to reſolve every condition or point of your engagement into that one, of being friendly to Sir L——.

You now alledge, that you was alarmed at the ſudden appearance of a neighbouring young nobleman, and his friend the L—A——. But they did not appear till Sir L—— had refuſed to agree to the Provoſt's plan; to which if he had acceded, he would have remained in as much power as any city-member ſhould have, that is, the influence of his merit and ſervices; and this would have been as peaceable an election as any we have ever had. But who can believe you was ſincere in your firſt engagement, when you ſo readily find an excuſe for drawing back? You frankly agree to a plan of the Provoſt to reſcue the magiſtracy from dependence and contempt; and yet, when you find it is in danger of miſcarrying through Sir L——'s preference to the old junto,

you give it up at once, on a pretended jealouſy of the beſt aid you could then obtain.

You acquieſce, it is true, in the high commendations given by the Provoſt to the young nobleman and eminent lawyer as juſt; but you will have nothing to do with them. You give no reaſon for rejecting the patronage of the Moſt Noble D——; and it is probable you have none; for his Grace ſtands as conſpicuous for honour and integrity, as he does for his birth and fortune, and predilection for this country.

The Right Honourable Lawyer you ſuſpect, were he politically connected with the city, might one day thwart your inclinations about the mode of bringing miniſters to Edinburgh; and you draw this concluſion from the appearances he has regularly made in the General Aſſembly. That gentleman has had parts and ſpirit enough to trace out a new path for himſelf. He has become at once a faithful ſervant of the crown, and an independent member of parliament. He has been liberal-minded enough to have overcome the narrow prejudices of party, and to have extended his views to the great objects of national welfare. What reaſon is there to ſuppoſe, that on the ſmall ſcale of city-politics he will not act with the ſame liberality as in the great affairs of the nation? In like manner, though acting as a judge, he gives execution to the law of patronage, and will always do it while it is the law; yet it is certain, that he and all his family are remarkable for conſulting the inclinations of the people, whenever they have it in their power to do ſo. Perhaps I felt upon the peruſal of this part of your letter more than I otherwiſe would have done, from the circumſtance of having an intereſt in the pariſh of the Weſt Church. You know as well as I do, the very candid and honourable part he acted in the late ſettlement of that numerous and important charge. No perſon joined more warmly than you did in applauding his conduct upon that occaſion; and therefore you are the more unpardonable in uttering ſuch inſinuations as that which leads me to my preſent animadverſion.

Do not think from any thing I have ſaid, that I urge you to put your conſcience under the guidance, either of the Noble Duke, or his Right Honourable friend. I doubt much if either of them would wiſh to receive ſuch a compliment from you, or any man. If you will join with me in thinking that the city ought to

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be controlled by the over-ruling influence of no great man, you would then hold the ideas of an independent man, and reſpectable citizen. But when you are determined to put yourſelf under the guidance of another individual, and wiſh your fellow-citizens to follow your example; I can find nothing in the compariſon between your patron and the two reſpectable perſons whom you object to, why they ſhould be proſcribed, and he courted with the moſt abject ſervility.

Like you, I think I may now appeal to my fellow citizens. You ſay, that the Lord Provoſt wanted you to go further than was at firſt propoſed; but that you thought you had gone far enough. Now I appeal to you, if, inſtead of going forward, you have not gone back; and I wiſh it may not always have been your intention to do ſo.

You conclude with a piece of pleaſantry, about taking a jaunt, with the Provoſt and Mr Elder, as far as Currie's at Dalkeith; who, when they have you on the way, urge you firſt to go to Dunbar, and then to Berwick. But you beg their pardon for that; and at parting exhort them to keep a good bridle-hand, leſt their horſes ſhould ſtumble, and they catch a fall. This is not an unpleaſant parable, though it is very unlike the reſt of your letter; and eſpecially the laſt paragraph of all, where you ſpeak with ſome warmth of your own capacity to feel, and your ability to make others feel alſo. —— But though it be pleaſant enough as you tell it; yet I think your conduct has been much more like to the Provoſt and Mr Elder's aſking you to go with them in a coach (for you ſeldom ride on horſeback) to the golf-houſe at Leith, to take a dinner with them at their own expence, and not that of the Good Town. —— You agree; and when you are ſeated, you beg them to go by St Andrew's ſquare, for you have to call upon Sir L—— D——. They comply with your deſire. They ſet you down at the great man's gate, and wait for your return. You obtain an audience, and come back. They drive to the foot of the walk: "Stop, coachman," cries the Bailie, and out you get. "Your ſervant, Gentlemen; I "wiſh you a good appetite; for I muſt go to my cellar, and "bottle ſome hogſheads of wine for Sir L——." And thus you leave them both the coach and the dinner to pay for.

I cannot conclude this addreſs, without aſſuring you, that few occurrences have given me more diſtreſs than the peruſal of your letter

letter did. Both you and I pretend to be, and I hope are, intereſted for the welfare of religion. You know, as well as I do, how apt ſcoffers at ſacred things are to take advantage of every ſlip into which any perſon ſuppoſed to be ſtrict in his principles happens to fall. One example of that kind does more miſchief than all the arguments which Deiſts, or Freethinkers, can urge againſt our cauſe. Think, then, Sir, what principles you have avowed. Think if ſuch principles are conſiſtent with the character of a faithful magiſtrate, or an honeſt man; and if you are convinced that they are not, think what fatal miſchief you have done, by putting it in the power of every idle ſcoffer to ſay, that ſuch principles can find acceſs into the breaſt of a profeſſed Religioniſt.

September 30.
1776.

A CITIZEN.

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